

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A steering wheel arrangement, the steering wheel arrangement comprising a fixed element, the fixed element carrying a first annular bearing, the annular bearing supporting a steering wheel for rotation relative to the fixed element, the fixed element also carrying a second bearing, the second bearing rotatably supporting a component to be connected to part of the steering column of a vehicle, the bearings both being retained to the fixed element by a first retaining element, the first bearing being retained to the steering wheel by a second retaining element, the first retaining element being formed of a generally circular plate and having first and second arcuate sections, the first and second arcuate sections being connected by first and second bridges, both of the first and second bridges having a reduced width compared to the first and second arcuate sections, the reduced width providing resiliency to the first retaining element resilient.

2. (Previously Presented) An arrangement according to Claim 1 wherein the fixed element has a housing part with an upper surface, the upper surface having at least two levels, the outer periphery of the upper surface defining a wall, the first bearing being mounted to that wall, the upper surface defining an opening having a side wall, the second bearing being mounted to that side wall; wherein the first retaining element comprises a plate which lies over the upper surface, the plate having a part which is

resiliently biased into contact with part of the first bearing and with part of the second bearing.

3. (Currently Amended) An arrangement according to Claim 2 wherein the first and second plate has two arcuate sections are located to either side of an aperture, one arcuate section being provided with retaining studs to secure the plate to the fixed element, the other arcuate section being resiliently connected to the first arcuate section and engaging both the first bearing and the second bearing.

4. (Previously Presented) An arrangement according to Claim 3 wherein the first arcuate section engages both the first bearing and the second bearing.

5. (Currently Amended) An arrangement according to Claim 3 wherein the first and second bridges flexibly interconnect the first and second arcuate sections ~~are interconnected by two relatively narrow interconnecting bridges.~~

6. (Previously Presented) An arrangement according to Claim 1, wherein the second retaining element is of annular form, the element carrying a plurality of radially inwardly directed lugs which engage the first bearing on which the steering wheel is mounted, the second retaining element being secured to part of the steering wheel.

7. (Previously Presented) An arrangement according to Claim 6 wherein the second retaining element is provided with a plurality of fixing studs, the fixing studs passing through corresponding apertures formed in part of the steering wheel.

8. (Previously Presented) An arrangement according to Claim 1, wherein the first retaining element further includes:

a first section overlying a portion of the first and second bearings for retaining the first and second bearings to the fixed element; and

a second section interconnected with the first section and overlying a portion of the first and second bearings for retaining the first and second bearings to the fixed element.

9. (Previously Presented) An arrangement according to Claim 8, wherein the first and second sections of the first retaining element are resiliently biased into contact with the first and second bearings at an undersurface of the first retaining element.

10. (Previously Presented) An arrangement according to Claim 1, wherein the center of rotation of the steering wheel is offset from the center of rotation of the steering column.

11. (Currently Amended) A steering wheel arrangement for a vehicle, the arrangement comprising:

a fixed element carrying a first annular bearing and a second annular bearing, wherein the first bearing supports a steering wheel for rotation relative to the fixed element and the second bearing supports a steering column for rotation relative to the fixed element;

a first retaining element having a first section and a second section, wherein the first section retains the first and second bearings to the fixed element at a first height and the second section retains the first and second bearings to the fixed element at a second height, the first height being greater than the second height, the first and second sections being interconnected to one another by first and second resilient bridges of reduced width as compared to the first and second sections; and

a second retaining element for retaining the first bearing to the steering wheel.

12. (Previously Presented) The steering wheel arrangement of Claim 11, wherein the fixed element further comprises:

an upper surface having at least two levels of differing height;

an outer periphery defining a wall, wherein the first bearing is mounted to the wall; and

an opening in the upper surface, wherein the second bearing is mounted to the opening.

13. (Previously Presented) The steering wheel arrangement of Claim 12, wherein the first and second sections of the first retaining element are resiliently biased into contact with the first and second bearings at an undersurface of the first retaining element.

14. (Previously Presented) The steering wheel arrangement of Claim 11, wherein the second retaining element is secured to the steering wheel.

15. (Previously Presented) The steering wheel arrangement of Claim 14, wherein the second retaining element further comprises:

a plurality of fixing studs, the fixing studs passing through corresponding apertures formed in part of the steering wheel.

16. (Previously Presented) The steering wheel arrangement of Claim 11, wherein the first and second bearings are coplanar.

17. (Previously Presented) The steering wheel arrangement of Claim 11, wherein the second bearing is mounted within the bounds of the first bearing.

18. (Currently Amended) A steering wheel arrangement for a vehicle, the arrangement comprising:

a fixed element carrying a first annular bearing and a second annular bearing, wherein the first bearing supports a steering wheel for rotation relative to the fixed element and the second bearing supports a steering column for rotation relative to the fixed element, the first bearing formed of a generally circular plate and defining an offset aperture, wherein the center of rotation of the steering wheel is offset from the center of rotation of the steering column and is accommodated by the offset aperture of the first bearing;

a first retaining element having a first section and a second section, wherein the first section retains about one-half of each of the first and second bearings to the fixed

element and the second section retains another about one-half of each of the first and second bearings to the fixed element; and

a second retaining element for retaining the first bearing to the steering wheel.

19. (Previously Presented) The steering wheel arrangement of Claim 18, wherein a surface of the first bearing and a surface of the second bearing are coplanar.

20. (Previously Presented) The steering wheel arrangement of Claim 18, wherein the first and second sections of the first retaining element are resiliently biased into contact with the first and second bearings at an under surface of the first retaining element.

21. (Currently Amended) A steering wheel arrangement comprising:

a steering wheel;

a fixed element carrying a first bearing and a second bearing, the first bearing supporting the steering wheel for rotation relative to the fixed element, the second bearing rotatably supporting a component to be connected to part of a steering column of a vehicle; and

a retaining element having a first portion retaining the first bearing to the fixed element and a second portion retaining the second bearing to the fixed element, the first portion ~~resiliently coupled to the second portion~~ by first and coupling portions being more resilient than the first and second portions.

22. (Previously Presented) A steering wheel arrangement according to Claim 21, wherein the first portion of the retaining element is drawn against the fixed element to resiliently move the first portion relative to the second portion.

23. (Previously Presented) A steering wheel arrangement according to Claim 21, wherein the first and second portions of the retaining element are arcuate and coupled by a pair of resilient necks.

24. (Previously Presented) A steering wheel arrangement according to Claim 22, wherein the first portion of the retaining element is secured with a pair of mounting studs.

25. (New) The steering wheel arrangement of Claim 18, wherein the first and second sections of the first retaining element are connected by first and second bridges of reduced width compared to the first and second sections.